Midwest Soil Health Summit Schedule Released: Added Programming, Discussion Tables, and More

The schedule is set for this year’s expanded Midwest Soil Health Summit, and we’ve added additional programming on the conference’s first day to buttress a second day that’s chock-full of expert soil health programming from the likes of Gabe Brown (above), Dr. Allen Williams, and more.

New learning and networking opportunities for the Summit’s first day include a session led by SFA Executive Director John Mesko on Soil Health Basics as well as an International Roundtable. Other programming the first day includes our popular social time with buffet and cash bar, the return of “Gab With Gabe,” a film screening, and more.

Our impromptu discussion tables were such a hit last year, they’re returning as well. Look for discussion tables throughout the day Feb. 19 featuring Summit experts, or suggest one you’d like to see – if you’re a dairy producer, maybe you want to network with other dairy producers; if you’re from North Dakota, maybe you would like to chat with others in your region. Discussion
tables are the perfect format. Make a suggestion to jerry@sfa-mn.org or talk to an SFA staffer at the Summit and we'll do our best to make it work.

Here’s the schedule, and don’t forget to register here ASAP as we are expecting a sellout.

**Wed., Feb. 18**
- 1 p.m. – Registration Opens
- 1 p.m. – Soil Health Basics with John Mesko
- 2:30 p.m. – International Round Table
- 4 p.m. – Special “Gab With Gabe” networking event with Gabe Brown. To attend you must purchase the additional “Gab With Gabe” ticket.
- 6 p.m. – Social Time begins with cash bar, heavy appetizer buffet, welcome, interview of Gabe Brown and Dr. Allen Williams by John Mesko, “Soil Carbon Cowboys” film screening, and more

**Thurs., Feb. 19**
- 7 a.m. – Registration opens
- 8 a.m. – Opening Plenary Session: Welcome and introduction by John Mesko, VIP Welcome, Housekeeping with Jerry Ford
- 8:15 a.m. – Dr. Allen Williams (right)
- 9:35 a.m. – Jerry Doan
- 10:30 a.m. – Discussion Tables: Allen Williams, Jerry Doan, Gabe Brown
- 11 a.m. – Ian Cunningham
- 11:45 a.m. – LUNCH: Buffet and discussion tables with Ian Cunningham and Gabe Brown
- 1 p.m. – Dr. Wendy Taheri, “Understanding the Role of Diversity in Agricultural Ecosystems"
- 1:45 p.m. – Dr. Michael Lehman
- 2:30 p.m. – Discussion Tables: Wendy Taheri, Mike Lehman
- 3 p.m. – Kent Solberg
- 3:50 p.m. – Keynote: Gabe Brown
- 5:15 p.m. – Conference ends

**Executive Director’s Note**

Here’s 4 ways SFAs New Farm Reality Check Curriculum is like a Driver’s Education Course.

1. Both offer a “Reality Check” for beginners who are getting ready to launch into a risky, difficult, but highly rewarding adventure.
2. Both teach about potential dangers participants will face.
3. Both seek to prepare participants to avoid those dangers
4. Both are eager to see participants engage in and succeed in their endeavors.

In beginning driver education classes, we’ve all seen the videos and heard the stories of terrible tragedies which can occur when drivers overlook unrealistic expectations,
bad assumptions and improper training and preparation. Does that mean we don’t want people to actually drive? Absolutely not! We are realistic about the difficulties and challenges of driving, because poorly trained drivers impact everyone on the road. SFA’s New Farm Reality Check Curriculum is no different. We want every farmer who launches to succeed.

This year’s SFA Annual Conference will feature a brief introduction to the New Farm Reality Check Curriculum. If you are thinking about launching your farm plan, you might want to check it out!

SFA Western Chapter Annual Meeting is Jan. 17

The Sustainable Farming Association’s Western Chapter is celebrating SFA’s 25th anniversary with its annual meeting from 4 to 8 p.m. Sat., Jan. 17, at the Milan Community Center Meeting Room (the old elementary school) in Milan. The event is free and all are welcome; registration is not required.

Here’s your chance to gather with local sustainable farmers to find out what SFA is all about AND what’s going on in our Western Chapter region. Bring yourself, family, a friend and a dish to share! Discover what SFA offers to members and the communities where we farm.

The schedule:

- 4 p.m. – Meet and mingle, tour of nearby Garden Goddess winter greenhouse and the season’s exciting research projects there
- 5 p.m. – Potluck
- 6 p.m. – Annual meeting
- 6:30 p.m. – Breakout for meetings of Grazing and Deep Winter Production interest groups
- 7:30 p.m. – Music jam of local farmer/musicians: Bring your instruments and voice to join in or just stick around to enjoy some great local music!

Still not sure you want to come? Consider these fabulous prizes:

- If this is your first SFA meeting, you’ll get a free membership.
- The person who travels the farthest will be awarded a special mug from SFA board member Richard Handeen.
- Door prizes will include a “Northland Winter Greenhouse Manual” and an organic apple share from Kaliroe Farm for fall 2015.

For more information, contact Richard Handeen at rhandeen@hotmail.com or 320.269.8971.

Central Annual Meeting is Jan. 17

Join SFA Central Chapter for its Annual Meeting from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sat., Jan. 17, at Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls meeting room, 116 8th Ave SE, Little Falls.

Planned are three panel discussions on local food distribution activities, pollinator politics, and restoring habitat for beneficial insects. Panelists include: Josephine Marcotty, Star Tribune; Sarah Foltz Jordan, Xerces Society; Russell Kleinschmidt, NRCS; Kent Solberg, SFA; Doug Ploof, Little Falls School District; Steve Jones, Superintendent, Little Falls School District; Arlene Jones and Jessie Borkenhagen, Sprout MN; Joe Luetmer, Local Harvest Market Co.; and Tyler Carlson, Early Boots Farm.

The agenda includes:

- July 11, 2015: FESTIVAL OF FARMS
- Aug. 15, 2015: MINNESOTA GARLIC FESTIVAL, McLeod County Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Minn.
- Sept. 2015: HARVEST FESTIVAL, Bayfront Park, Duluth

Adjacent 2015

Have you had to make changes to your farm plan since you started farming? Your experiences could help other farmers. Check out our survey.

Our ongoing GrazeFest series of grass-based livestock and cover cropping events is led by Livestock and Grazing Coordinator Kent Solberg. Visit our GrazeFest homepage and watch SFA.
South Central Chapter Annual Meeting is Jan. 17

Join SFA's South Central Chapter for its Annual Meeting, “Diversifying Agriculture: Human Health to Landscape Health, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Jan. 17 at St. Casimir’s Church, 320 2nd Ave SW, Wells. The event is free and no registration is required.

The meeting will focus on the connections between soils, human health and landscape health. Speakers include Dr. George Kindness and Dr. Don Wyse, and lunch is available for attendees.

For more information, email linda@ruraladvantage.org or call 507.238.5449.

Cannon River Chapter Annual Meeting is Jan. 24

The Cannon River SFA Chapter is holding its annual meeting on Saturday, January 24, from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., in the Community Room at Just Food Co-op, 516 South Water Street, Northfield.

Lunch will be potluck; beverages will be provided.

AGENDA
10-10:30 a.m.: Registration
10:30-11 a.m.: Overview of changing food rules & statutes in MN
11-11:45 a.m.: Strategizing for our Farmer-to-Farmer Exchanges
   - February: "What's Inspiring You in 2015?" Mary Ellen Frame, Northfield
   - March: "Orchard Pruning," John Porterfield, Northfield
   - April: "Compost Tea Project Update," Becca Carlson, Northfield
   - May: "Stacking Livestock Enterprises on A Small Farm," Kathy Zeman, Nerstrand
11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.: Potluck Lunch
12:45-1 p.m.: Discussion on organizing cooperative volume buys on inputs
1-1:30 p.m.: Annual meeting, including election of Board members
1:30-2 p.m.: Board members meet to elect officer team

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Crow River Annual Meeting is Jan. 31

The SFA Crow River Chapter is hosting its Annual Meeting, "Local Foods – The Journey Continues: Expanding the Breadth and Depth of Eating Local," from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sat., Jan. 31, at Buffalo United Methodist Church, 609 8th Street NW, Buffalo.

Building on our last Annual Meeting, Crow River Chapter will bring together area farmers, food advocates, chefs, and others to discuss the potential for moving local foods further into the mainstream, revisiting and exploring topics including:

- Reforming and/or reinstating culinary education in public schools
- Working with area news media to promote the message of local foods
- Encouraging restaurants and groceries to purchase more local foods, regardless of the extra price they may have to charge to consumers
- Creating a support network for growers who would like to produce and process specialty crops. This network could include: processing facilities; community kitchens; markets; etc.
- Organizing the ‘alphabet soup’ of sustainable farm and food organizations around a common message
- And the Sneak Preview of the new CROW RIVER LOCAL KETCHUP!

And we’re pleased to announce that two of our featured speakers will be Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl, Twin Cities’ premier expert on food, and a critic at Minneapolis/St.Paul Magazine; and Jenny Breen, a preeminent Minnesota chef and local foods advocate.

Enjoy a potluck with Mary Jane’s fabulous Mac & Cheese – bring a dish to share.

POT LUCK with a Main Dish (Mary Jane’s Fabulous Mac & Cheese!) and Beverages by Mary Jane Miller. Bring something to share!

Cost is just $10. [Click here to register.](#)

SFA Deep Roots Program Hosting Nuts and Bolts Workshop

**Nuts and Bolts**, a workshop designed for those with a desire to farm but with little or no experience with common farm tools and equipment, is set for 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Sat., March 21 at Paradox Farm, 11643 State Hwy 78, Ashby, Minn. In this workshop, students will gain practical experience with farm tools and materials.

Get prepared for the upcoming season of food production by participating in this Deep Roots Farmer Development Program workshop. You will increase your handiness while developing competence with farm tools and materials. Get the edge for summer farm internships by listing this course on your resume! This is also an appropriate preparatory course for Farm Skills 101.

Small class size guarantees that all students receive ample individual attention. Course instructors are seasoned farmers. Students should have gloves and safety glasses and wear closed-toe shoes and long pants.

Course outline:
Common hand tool identification and use on the farm
- Hands-on operation of common tools
- Ergonomics and body mechanics
- Common hardware identification & use: nails, nuts, bolts, staples, screws
- Building materials, such as lumber
- Small carpentry project completed during class

Paradox Farm is 7 miles north of Ashby; 10 miles south of Battle Lake. Bring a sack lunch. Cost: $99 early bird registration by Feb. 14; $129 thereafter. No walk-in registration.

Click here to register. Questions? Email sue@sfa-mn.org or call 218.747.2202.

New Deb Wallwork Film and Other AC Tidbits

Join us during lunch at the SFA Annual Conference, set for Feb. 14 at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, for a viewing and discussion of "Grow," a short film that captures the stories of young farmers around Fergus Falls and shares their visions for the local food movement and the future of Minnesota's rural communities. The session will be hosted by SFA Sustaining Member Katy Olson, who is featured in the film. Katy is a farmer, beginning farmer mentor, activist, and owner of Body Mind Center with a focus on holistic health.

More Annual Conference Tidbits:

- **The Seed Swap is returning!** Bring your seeds and swap away.
- **Chapters:** Take part in our Opening Session Chapter Showcase by giving a one-minute introduction of your chapter, and share your happenings from 2014 and what you’re planning for 2015. Or, foster conversation and promote chapter engagement throughout the conference by preparing a tri-fold display to show all your chapter’s projects. SFA Communications Coordinator Jason Walker can provide chapters with display advice, graphics and fonts; email him at jason@sfa-mn.org. To reserve a spot for your showcase presentation and your display, contact Helen Schnoes, SFA Event Coordination Intern: helenaschnoes@gmail.com or 612.741.1591.
- **Through Feb. 1, 2015**, we will be collecting SFA members’ most important questions for attorneys Jennifer Jambor-Delgado and Amanda Heyman to answer during a special session at the Annual Conference. At the conference, Jambor-Delgado and Heyman will also provide information about how smart legal strategies can help grow and protect your business. Join us in making this great opportunity a success – send your questions to hello@jamborheyman.com.
- **Socialize with your farmer friends the night before** the SFA Annual Conference during a reception and jam session from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, Feb. 13 at Minnesota Street Market (the food co-op in downtown St. Joseph). Bring the whole family, your instruments, or just drop in to say hello. The event is free, but RSVP by Feb. 9 to lisa@bakersacresfarm.com if you would like to buy a simple soup meal served at the co-op.
- **Art and science projects, cooking lessons and more** – the Budding Farmers program is coming to the 2015 SFA Annual Conference. Children attending must be between 3 and 12 years old and potty trained; kids under 3 are welcome to attend the conference but are the responsibility of their parents. Click here to register.
- **Volunteer registration is now open** – all 2015 volunteers receive a newly designed SFA t-shirt. Volunteers are needed to be session monitors, help with parking and registration, setup/teardown, and more. To volunteer or to learn more, contact SFA Volunteer Coordinator Gretchen Boyum at 218.535.1567 or boyumfarms@gmail.com.
- **Register through Jan. 31** at the rate of $55/members and $65/nonmembers. SFA members should have received a separate email with discount registration instructions. Only SFA
members will receive this separate email – new members will upon signup.

- **Vendor/Exhibitor Registration** is open as well. Visit our Annual Conference homepage to download the proper form.

- **Scholarships** to attend the SFA Annual Conference are available for current students and require a volunteer commitment; for more information, email Jerry Ford at jerry@sfa-mn.org.

### Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council Meeting is Feb. 20

The new Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council, which has recently joined SFA as its inaugural Networking Group, is hosting its winter meeting.

The Forage Council gathering will be Friday, Feb. 20, 2015, at Central Lakes College in Staples and will feature Dr. Allen Williams as the keynote speaker. Bluffton, Minn., beef producer Steve Flanagan will also be speaking on how he uses rotation grazing and cover crops on his farm.

Look for more information in future editions of SFA Connect.

### Small-Scale Sheep Event in Lake Agassiz on Feb. 21

SFA Lake Agassiz Chapter is co-sponsoring a Small Scale Sustainable Sheep Farming Event from 10:45 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Feb. 21 at Northern Woolen Mills, 803 11th St. NW, Fosston, Minn. Learn about raising sheep as part of a holistically managed farm, for meat, milk and fiber as well as connect with established shepherds and those wanting to keep sheep, local markets and people interested in sheep products.

Informational booths providing education, information on programs through NRCS and services for shepherds are planned, as well as a tour of Northern Woolen Mills, and lunch will be catered by Quinn Olson, Manager Fosston Farmers Market.

Cost is $15 for the public and $10 for SFA members. Under 16 free. For more information or to register by Feb. 14, contact Alethea Kenney at 218.657.2502 or allie@reedbird.com, or visit www.reedbird.com.

### Annual Conference Photo Feature

Photographer extraordinaire Crystal Liepa once again documented our 2014 Annual Conference, held Feb. 8, 2014, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. To learn more about Crystal, visit her website.
Local Foods College Webinar Series Slated

The Local Foods College, part of a movement to strengthen local and regional food systems, has announced dates for its 2015 webinar series of eight sessions designed for gardeners and farmers who are part of a community-based food system. Sessions focus on fertility, pollination, marketing and fermentation.

The first session is Tues., Jan. 13, and will continue on Tuesday evenings through March 3. The series will be available via webinar, so participants can join at home or at one of several locations throughout northern and central Minnesota. Registration is FREE with print-your-own materials.

Session topics include: Natural Soil Fertility; Vegetable Production Tips and Tricks; Marketing and Business Planning; Pollination; Deep Winter Greenhouses; Growing in Small Spaces; Food Hubs and Farm to Bottle.

For more detailed information and registration, click here or call 888-241-0781.

RSDP Webinar to Address Foodshed Spatial Mapping

Join the University of Minnesota Regional Partnerships for a webinar on the first Minnesota application of the acclaimed foodshed spatial mapping model developed for New York by Dr. Christian Peters.

During the webinar, set for 11 a.m.-noon Wed., Jan. 14, U of M Soil, Water, and Climate Research Fellow Jake Galzki will discuss research to determine food demands of SE Minnesota based on population data and a representative diet. The study analyzed the feasibility of supplying the nutritional needs for a 15-county region entirely from locally grown foods. This research was funded by the U of M SE Regional Sustainable Development Partnership as part of the SE Foodshed Planning Initiative. Contact Erin Meier for more information at tegtm003@umn.edu.

Lakewinds Organic Field Fund Seeks Applications
Lakewinds Food Co-op is seeking applications for the 2015 version of Lakewinds Organic Field Fund, a grant program for new and emerging organic farms, farms in transition, qualifying animal operations, and organic producers. Details are available at www.lakewinds.coop/community/loff.
SFA Connect is your bi-weekly link to the Sustainable Farming Association

The Sustainable Farming Association is a chapter-based, statewide non-profit organization that supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking. If you, your farm or organization has any upcoming events that you would like posted on the SFA Community Calendar, email info@sfa-mn.org.

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